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ABSTRACT

In February 1991, policymakers and representatives of resource agencies and nonprofit organizations met to find solutions to a major regional crisis--the lack of housing for farmworkers and day laborers in San Diego County. The region contains about 200 worker camps, usually situated in undeveloped canyons and fields near suburban residential tracts. Residents (mostly male Mexican documented workers) live in primitive conditions without potable water or utilities. An action plan compiled by a San Diego city councilmember outlines steps to meet conference goals: (1) generating the political will to provide adequate affordable housing for farmworkers; (2) generating public support and dispelling negative attitudes toward farmworkers through a public information campaign (including school programs about the contributions of migrant workers); (3) coordinating efforts among jurisdictions; (4) adopting innovative incentives to promote or require the provision of housing as part of the local development process; (5) reducing health and safety hazards in existing camps; (6) assisting workers and their families to integrate into American society by providing educational opportunities, employment opportunities, and adequate health care; and (7) identifying sources of funding. In five workshops, participants discussed issues and suggested actions related to land use and development, private and government funding, nonprofit housing solutions, regulation of rural homeless camps, and public policy. Appendices list conference participants and outline public policy and perception issues related to public information, legal issues, responsibility and accountability, funding, housing, need for services, and binational concerns. (SV)

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ED 363 479

Results of the Multi-Jurisdictional Conference on the Farmworker and Day Laborer Housing Crisis

Convened by
San Diego City Councilmember
Abbe Wolfsheimer

February 21, 1991

RC 019362

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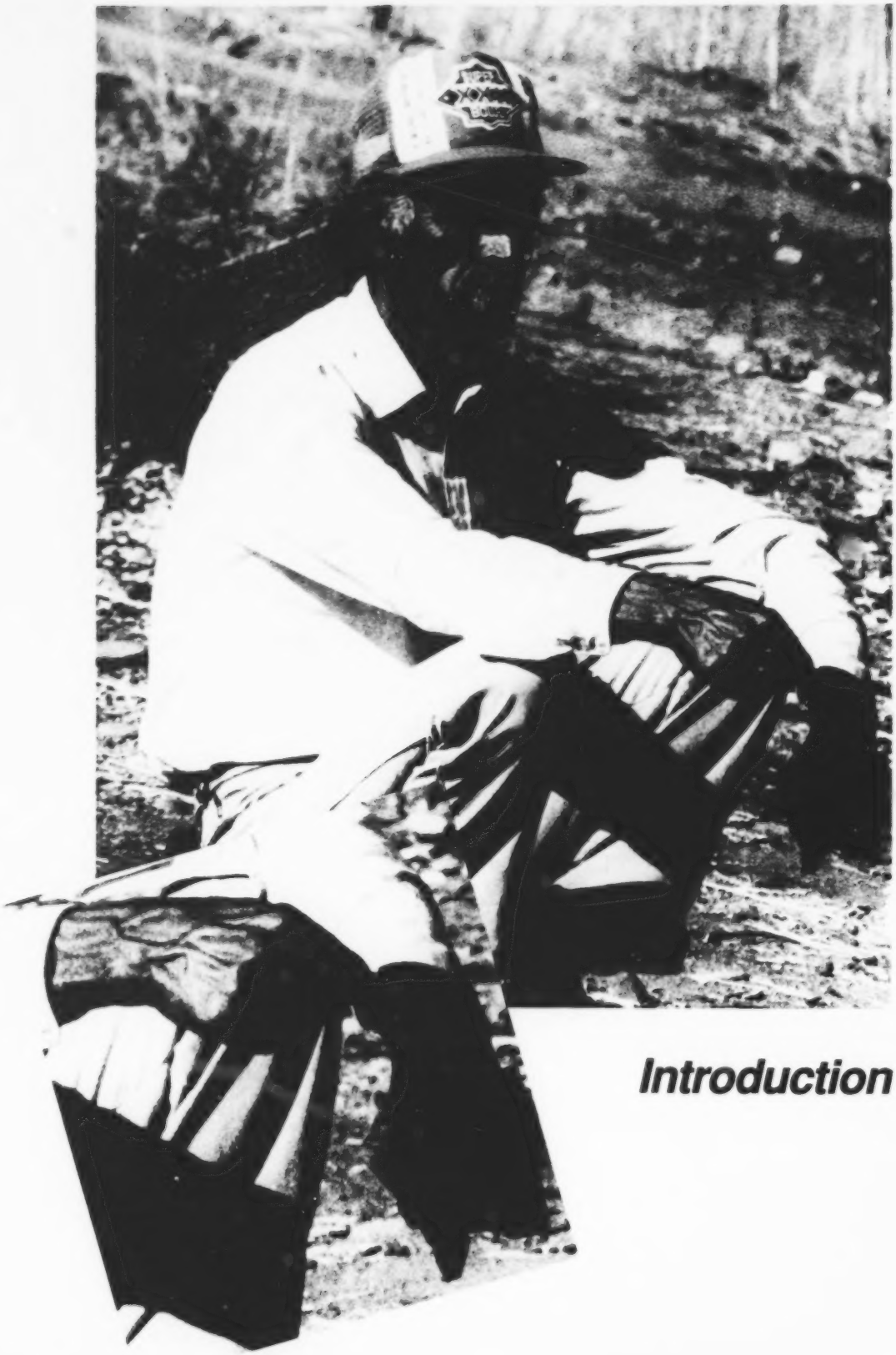

Introduction

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Conference Overview

The City of San Diego's Multi-Jurisdictional Conference on the Farmworker/Day Laborer Housing Crisis was convened on February 21, 1991, by San Diego City Councilmember Abbe Wolfsheimer. The purpose of this conference was to bring together the policy makers, resource agencies and non-profit organizations who could develop recommendations and find solutions to a major regional crisis - the lack of housing for farmworkers and day laborers. The conference was attended by 185 participants including representatives of the cities of San Diego, Carlsbad, Del Mar, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, Poway, San Marcos, Solana Beach, and Vista, along with the County of San Diego, representatives of the Mexican Consulate, a number of federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations. Registrants are listed in Appendix B.

The Multi–Jurisdictional Farmworker Day Laborer Conference was designed to elicit a diversity of issues and solutions. The conference participants were given the opportunity to attend one of five concurrent work session topics:

- Land Use and Development
- Private and Government Funding
- Non-Profit Housing Solutions
- Regulation of Rural Homeless Camps
- Public Policy and Perceptions

The creative approaches and ideas developed within each of the workshop sessions are summarized in this report in two segments. The first segment recommends an Action Plan compiled by Councilmember Wolfsheimer's office. This plan succinctly outlines the steps that need to be taken to reach each of the conference goals. The second segment provides a brief synopsis of the hurdles faced in trying to ensure that each farmworker and day laborer has a safe, healthy and affordable place to live. It also describes specific recommendations made within each workshop to overcome these barriers.

Several common issues and proposed solutions evolved from the five workshop sessions. Perhaps the most important of the issues raised was that of generating the political will to solve this housing problem. Without the political will to solve this problem all individual and collective efforts will be in vain. While it is apparent that this issue has found champions in City Councilmember Abbe Wolfsheimer and County Supervisor John MacDonald, a regional grassroots organization is needed.

Existing Conditions

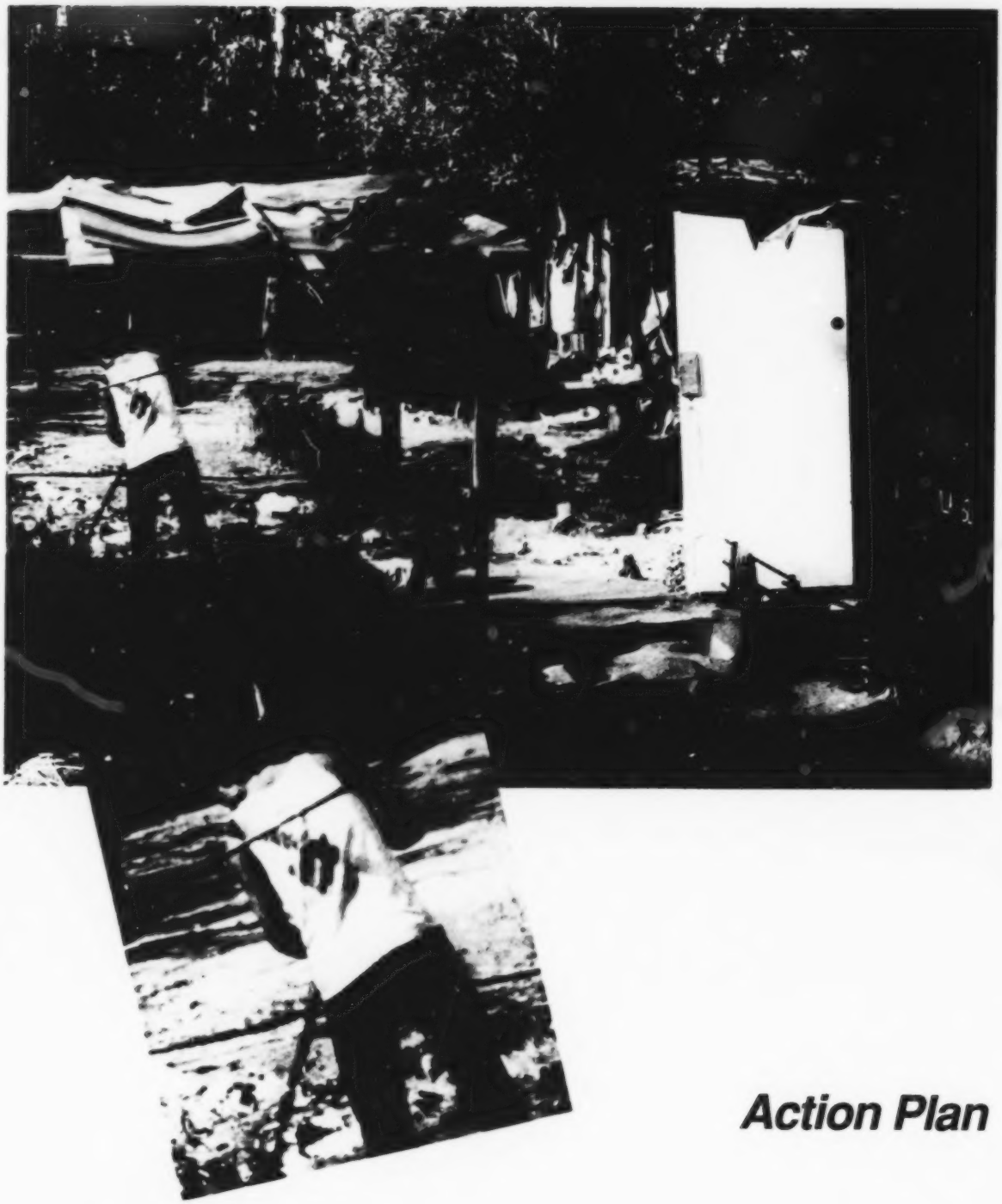
Very few San Diego County residents have seen the "home" of a typical farmworker or day laborer, since the typical farmworker or day laborer usually lives out of sight to avoid harassment. These workers commonly live in undeveloped canyons and fields near suburban residential tracts.

To comprehend, in part, the living conditions of these people, imagine a concealed canyon. Approach it by a well–worn footpath. The first objects that catch your eye are bright blue plastic tarpaulins stretched into tent-like structures among the trees and bushes. Among the tarp tents are smaller shelters crudely constructed from weathered pieces of plywood, lumber and wooden crates. Here and there are old chairs and tables and well-worn mattresses. Clothes hang from lines strung between the trees. Stashes of cooking pots and utensils are near the charred remains of a fire. A rusty old bicycle is leaning against a tree. Empty plastic bottles (water, Coca Cola) are scattered about the bare earth. This is "home" for several of the approximately 15,000 farmworkers or day laborers in the region. There are about 200 such worker camps in the region. Few camps have potable water, utilities or waste disposal systems.

Who are the workers to be found in such a camp?

A recent report on "Homeless Farmworkers and Day Laborers" by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless (February, 1991) profiles typical homeless workers as follows:

- Their mean age is 35 years old. Life expectancy is 40 years as opposed to the national average of 75 years.
- They are, for the most part, unaccompanied males. Recently, however, family members have been joining them.
- The majority of the workers are documented and live semi–permanently in the San Diego region.
- Workers commonly return to their native villages in southern Mexico in late fall and winter months. Many are from extremely poor villages in the Oaxaca area. (A bus ride to Oaxaca is five days and $70 from Tijuana.)



Action Plan

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GOAL 1

Generate the political will to find ways and means to provide adequate, affordable housing for farmworkers and day laborers. Develop a pragmatic political strategy that includes the following actions:

Action

- Conduct "mobile workshops" to enable elected officials to see the deplorable conditions existing in most camps and view successful solutions such as those in the Coachella Valley.
- Find the means to construct an affordable local housing project that demonstrates the desirable and feasible aspects of adequate farmworker/day laborer housing to public officials and the general public.

GOAL 2

Generate public support for adequate farmworker and day laborer housing while simultaneously dispelling harmful myths and negative attitudes toward these workers.

Action

- Identify target audiences. Develop a bi-lingual media approach together with a fund-raising campaign to obtain necessary monies. Engage the cooperation and sponsorship of various organizations such as:
    - SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments) to develop a bilingual fact sheet
    - KPBS to produce and air programs highlighting the issues
    - Local school districts, to establish educational programs to emphasize the contributions of farmworkers and day laborers.
- Extend the public information campaign to local, state and federal legislators to gain support for funding and legislation that adequately and accurately addresses San Diego County's unique situation.

GOAL 3

Coordinate efforts within and between jurisdictions to facilitate the provision of adequate, affordable housing for farmworkers and day laborers.

Action

- Establish a new county-wide task force merging the City and County task forces and/or establish a regional joint powers authority consisting of representatives of affected areas in the county to coordinate plans to achieve affordable housing. Broaden representation to include farmworkers and day laborers.
- Fund a strong non-profit agency to serve as an advocate for this issue, to provide a clearinghouse for information, to foster stronger coalitions between non-profit organizations, to maintain an inventory of potential sites, to raise funds and to develop housing. A memorandum of understanding between the cities and county could be signed to jointly support this non-profit organization. (Also see Conference Synopsis Workshop on "Non–Profit Housing Solutions".)
- Use SANDAG as an interim forum for regional and coordinated action.

GOAL 4

Within relevant public agencies encourage the adoption of innovative incentives to promote and/or require the provision of adequate farmworker and day laborer housing as part of the development process. Aid potential farmworker housing developers in dealing with red tape, unwieldy regulations, and high permit costs.

Action

- Encourage the appointment of one or more "process runners" within each jurisdiction to assist developers from the point of application through occupancy. Expeditors would typically be in the City Manager's Office and/or in the Planning Departments.
- Encourage jurisdictions in the region to fast track development permits for projects which include housing for farmworkers and day laborers.
- Waive fees for the development of farmworker or day laborer housing.

- Require administrative rather than discretionary approvals to aid in expediting the development process.
- Design and implement a media campaign that informs growers and developers of the special benefits they will receive if they provide housing for farmworkers or day laborers.
- Provide density bonuses or other incentives to developers building or assisting in the construction of housing for farmworkers and day laborers.
- Work with local jurisdictions and community-based organizations to develop incentives for temporary solutions for farmworker and day laborer housing on private property until permanent solutions are developed.
- Relax building code requirements or establish alternate building code requirements for farmworker/day laborer housing.

GOAL 5

Reduce health and safety hazards in existing farm worker camps

Action

- Identify publicly and privately-owned campground/ farmworker housing sites within the region. Coordinate this search with all jurisdictions and organizations.
- Obtain funding and upgrade farmworker housing on the City of San Diego leaseholds in the San Pasqual Valley.
- Coordinate and encourage the development of standardized interpretations of the codes within and between jurisdictions which facilitate the development and/or improvement of farmworker and day laborer temporary and permanent housing.

GOAL 6

Assist farmworkers, day laborers and their families with integration into American society.

Action

- Provide educational opportunities to learn customs, laws and language.
- Facilitate linkage with employment opportunities such as farmworker hiring halls or job banks.
- Ensure the provision of adequate health care.
- Disseminate information about these opportunities to farmworkers and day laborers.

GOAL 7

Identify and tap all potential sources for funding farmworker housing, demonstration projects, public information campaigns or innovative approaches.

Action

- Compile a comprehensive list of Federal, State and local policies and programs related to the production of farmworker and day laborer housing. A strong multijurisdictional, non-profit corporation such as that proposed earlier would be the ideal organization to implement this task. (See Conference Synopsis Section on "Private and Government Funding" summarizing FHA, California Department of Housing and Community Development and County of San Diego programs designed to assist in funding housing for farmworkers and day laborers.)
- Explore other possible funding sources including redevelopment agencies, housing authority reserves, Community Development Block Grant funds, City of San Diego Housing Trust Fund, the new County Trust Fund together with other state and federal programs, private foundations and corporations.

Land Use and Development

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Land use regulations in this county are major obstacles to the production of farmworker and day laborer housing. Current regulations are primarily concerned with urban and suburban settings and are not sensitive to this housing need. A common thread in the recommended actions in this session was the need to streamline the planning and development process for farmworker and day laborer housing. The key issues discussed were:

ISSUE

Paradoxically, in spite of the severe lack of adequate housing, workers are not using some of the existing housing built for them. Apparently, this is because the housing design is inappropriate for their needs. For example, few men reside within the dormitories built by Singh Farm in Oceanside, which are capable of housing 326 agricultural workers. The low occupancy is apparently due to the workers' dislike of the two–story, barracks-like living arrangements (eight men to a room), the rules and restrictions, rental costs and the lack of sensitivity to the ideas and needs of the workers.

Action

- Consult farmworkers regarding building design, reasonable operating procedures and rent levels to avoid unusable designs.
- Subsidy programs that assist in financing dormitory projects should reflect realistic and attainable rent levels.

ISSUE

It is not clear whether the employer is responsible for providing housing for farm workers and/or day laborers or whether cities, the county, State or Federal government should take charge.

Action

- Legislation defining responsibility for the provision of housing needs to be developed first at the local level and eventually at the State and/or Federal levels.

ISSUE

The regulatory environment is often not conducive to the development of affordable farmworker housing: a) Codes are often not uniform among jurisdictions.; b) Within a single jurisdiction, regulatory inconsistencies are often found among various codes, plans and the housing element.; and, c) Standards in the Uniform Building Code (UBC) do not allow the type of farmworker housing which is both desirable and affordable.

Action

- Smaller size projects that fit certain criteria could be allowed by right in the agricultural zones. By eliminating the lengthy and expensive use permit process, growers would find it easier to provide housing on their property.

ISSUE

Greater flexibility is needed thoughout the entire development permit approval process, especially with zoning regulations and the special use permit approval process. Often the types of housing needed for farmworkers or day laborers and the procedures required are not specified. Government agencies charged with reviewing and approving projects which include farmworker housing often do not have clearly defined requirements, nor staff familiar with the procedures.

Action

- Each jurisdiction in the county should assign a specific staff planner or planners as knowledgeable advocates for farmworker housing during project permit processing. These staff persons should be at a senior level and well-versed in farmworker housing issues as well as permit processing. These staff members should be assigned to shepherd these special housing projects from beginning to end.

ISSUE

Regulations are often not uniform between jurisdictions and internal inconsistencies are often found within a juridiction's codes, land use plans and housing elements.

Action

- All jurisdictions in San Diego County are charged by State law with revising their Housing Elements. Sections that relate to the provision of low-income housing or housing for farmworkers and day laborers should be revised now to make them more explicit. Although, State law already requires that local housing elements identify adequate sites to encompass all housing needs it was felt that the elements should explicity describe sites for farmworker and day laborer housing.

ISSUE

Jurisdictions should be encouraged to provide incentives for the construction of farmworker and day laborer housing.

Action

- Present San Diego County policy-makers with a proposal to expand the current county ordinance that deals with farmworker housing to allow density increases on agriculturally-zoned property for projects that could also house day laborers. Modify the ordinance to allow non-profit organizations or other groups to provide such housing off-site. Use this ordinance as a model for other jurisdictions in the region.

ISSUE

Often different levels of discretionary approval are required which are confusing, expensive and costly.

Action

- Encourage policy-makers and administrators to direct that the approval process be streamlined for these projects. Set clear standards that are amenable to ministerial rather than discretionary approval. Coordinate this process within and between jurisdictions.

ISSUE

After the farmworker housing is built, the conditions and affordability of housing may not be maintained.

Action

- Mechanisms must be devised and sustained to ensure the maintenance of safe and adequate housing conditions and housing affordability. Deed restrictions are one such mechanism.
- In many cases it was much easier to identify difficulties than to determine the changes needed to remedy the problems. Probably the most intractable problem was the general fear of the public that farmworker/day laborer housing was something undesirable for their neighborhood -- a classic NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) issue. Many successful projects will have to be built before a dent can be made in such fears.

ISSUE

People often feel that their health and safety as well as their property values are threatened by living near farmworker housing compounds.

Action

- To help alleviate the impacts careful siting and site design of farmworker and day laborer residential developments is imperative. Housing should be sited to minimize visibility from adjacent residential areas. Siting should also minimize the potential for development of access footpaths through or near adjacent residential areas. Sites should be screened and buffered with walls, fences, beaming and/or landscaping. Septic fields and site drainage should be designed and maintained to prevent surface and ground water contamination.

ISSUE

Non-profit organizations and groups interested in aiding in the provision of farmworker housing sometimes do not have the technical expertise to follow through with their objectives.

Action

- Organizations with the required expertise such as the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), Local Initiative Support Commission (LISC), and Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), should be encouraged to organize seminars and workshops to help build the technical capacity of organizations willing to aid in the construction of farmworker housing.

ISSUE

San Diego County has not included day laborers in county policies regarding low income or farmworker housing.

Action

- Contact Supervisor McDonald to enlist his support in including day laborers within San Diego County policies regarding low income or farmworker housing.

Private and Government Funding

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Financial Sources

The following is a synopsis of the recommended steps to be taken to obtain funding as well as the sources and types of funding potentially available for housing for farmworkers and day laborers.

- Compile a comprehensive list of Federal, State and local policies and programs governing the production of farmworker housing.
- Analyze which existing programs, financing, or legislation address day laborer housing needs, as distinguished from farmworker housing needs
- Determine whether existing legislation that provides for seasonal housing can be amended to address our regional need for year round housing for day laborers and farmworkers.
- Analyze and publicize how overly restrictive funding regulations discourages the construction of housing for farmworkers and day laborers.

FHA Grants/Loans

The Farmers Home Administration (FHA), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has a variety of programs that serve farmers. FHA programs that are specifically directed to housing issues include family home ownership, family rental and labor housing both seasonal and year-round. Mike Carnes, Assistant District Administrator of the Farmers Home Administration described briefly the key elements of available FHA programs. To be eligible for FHA housing programs, $3,835 of annual income must be earned from agriculture.

Previous programs were limited to applicants who could claim year round residency. Presently, however, funding for migrant housing is available. Funding is also available for single-male housing. Model programs, however, are lacking.

FHA provides grant and loan funding to public and nonprofit agencies. Certain limits apply: grant funds are allowed up to 90 percent of an award; grants aren't available for rental assistance subsidies; only rental assistance programs may receive funding for operating costs; and no pre-development funds are available.

In evaluating projects for funding, FHA looks for demonstrated need; good management; family projects with day care facilities; and centrally located complexes that are well integrated into the community, typically at densities of 15-20 dwelling units per acre. Developers must conduct an environmental review of the proposed project.

State Funding

The State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has six programs to fund housing for farmworkers and day laborers. Howard Fish, Project Manager from the State DHCD summarized these programs for participants.

1. The Pre-Development Loan Program provides three year loans at 7 percent interest rate, which may be used to cover 75 percent of pre-development costs.
2. The Farmworker Housing Grant Program provides funds that may be used for either ownership or rental programs. A Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) will soon be released.
3. The Family Housing and Demonstration Program provides funds for new housing, along with support services.
4. The Rental Housing and Construction Program (funded through Propositions 74, 84, and 156) provides four year loans at 3 percent interest rate for new construction. This program may be tied to tax credits.
5. The California Housing Rehabilitation Program provides funds for acquisition, rehabilitation, and/or maintenance of low income housing, including SROs (as well as for earthquake retrofit purposes).
6. The Office of Migrant Services (Proposition 84 funded) provides grants to construct both seasonal and year round farmworker housing. These funds have certain constraints: they require matching funds; they cannot be used for operating costs, rehabilitation or expansion.

Financial Incentives

San Diego County has an ordinance designed to create incentives for growers to build farmworker housing which includes fee waivers (Community Development Block Grant funds may be used to reduce developer fees) and density bonuses.

Public accountability and commitment were deemed essential components of any financial plan to solve this problem. Once this commitment is made, the tasks for local jurisdictions are:

1. To define the housing needs for the farmworker and day laborer population in the Housing Element of their General Plan.
2. To develop a financial strategy aimed at gaining access to available funds, which might include tax credits, Section 8 reserve, CDGB, and 20 percent set aside funds.

Non-Profit Financing

Funds are available; the problem is access and allocation.

The participants in this session determined that a strong nonprofit organization financed by local jurisdictions should take charge of this issue. Such a nonprofit organization could be structured as a multi-jurisdictional financing team or a Housing Trust Fund for farmworkers and day laborers. The function of this non-profit corporation would be to:

1. Act as a clearing house for funding information
2. Establish an inventory of available and suitable land
3. Provide adequate predevelopment and site control expenses

Non-Profit
Housing Solutions

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Barriers to the provision of housing for the farmworker and day laborer population were identified by conference participants. Recommendations for actions to overcome specific barriers topped the agenda for this workshop.

ISSUE

One identified barrier is the lack of strong coalitions between local governments, community groups, non-profit organizations, churches, and other agencies committed to solving this problem. Language and cultural differences between workers and potential allies within the community discourages joint efforts and prevents workers from participating in the process of creating housing solutions.

Few non-profits have made a commitment to build housing in the northern portions of San Diego City and County and fewer governmental jurisdictions have made commitments to subsidize that housing. There are a number of vocal opponents - among elected officials, bureaucracies, and neighbors - with few vocal proponents of solutions. The size and complexity of the problem coupled with the cost of solutions seems to foster inertia.

Action

Conference participants recommended the following actions to break down these barriers:

- Select and fund an organization to identify, assist, and link activists across the county into a broad coalition.
- Establish a central clearinghouse for information, local contacts, relevant resources, and social services.
- The chair of the California Rural Housing Coalition, Stan Keasling, volunteered assistance in structuring a coalition-building organization. Alternatively, San Diego's new Non-profit Federation for Housing and Community Development might be an appropriate organization to assume this task.

ISSUE

Another major barrier to solving the provision of housing is the lack of resources at every level. From the renters' perspective, workers can afford to pay only a very limited monthly rent, from $40 to $100 per month. At the development level, land costs are very high, and projects need government subsidies to make them economically feasible. State housing programs do not generally fund housing for single people, who make up the majority of the farmworker/day laborer population. Non-profit organizations lack financing for staff and the overhead costs needed to assemble a project and seek outside funding. Resources are lacking for the range of services (English classes, job training, and education) required to make housing part of an integrated support system for the workers. Finally, there is a scarcity of staff and personnel (including governmental staff) knowledgeable in issues regarding farmworker/day laborer housing and facilitating involvement of non-profit institutions.

Action

- Allocate funds over a multi-year period to support staff and overhead costs for an existing or newly created non-profit developer of farmworker/day laborer housing. Link funding to the production of a specified number of units in a fixed period of time.
- Possible funding sources include: redevelopment agencies, housing authority reserves, Community Development Block Grant funds, City of San Diego Housing Trust Fund, a new county trust fund, state and federal programs, private foundations and corporations.
- Use some of the same government sources to create a demonstration program to fund several small-scale non-profit housing projects in various communities to serve as models.
- Match developers with existing social service agencies that provide necessary services to workers, so that neighborhood residents can be assured of mimimal impact to their community.
- Enlist the aid of college student interns/VISTA volunteers to provide support services.
- Target a percentage (such as 70 percent) of all CDBG funds for affordable housing.

- Redevelopment agencies should allocate 20 percent of housing set aside funds for very low income people. State legislation should be passed to increase the housing set aside allocation to 40 percent.
- Request that public agencies provide free or low-cost land for farmworker/day laborer and other low income housing.
- Require private builders to either include a minimum percentage of affordable units in projects or pay an in lieu fee. When housing is built on land that has recently been in agricultural use, both the percentage and fee requirements should be proportionately higher.
- Follow steps outlined in "Government Funding" in addition to the above listed actions. The entire workshop describes specific programs and actions to be taken to obtain government monies for farmworker housing.

ISSUE

Another identified barrier is the lack of understanding between the farmworker, local governments, and longer-term residents. Migrants are not being asked what kind of housing solutions they want and need. There is a general misconception that most farmworkers/ day laborers are undocumented and make no contribution to the economy. This perception permeates thinking to the extent that it interferes with the political will to solve the problem.

Action

- See GOAL 2 in the Action Plan which recommends a media campaign to dispel negative stereotypes about farm workers and day laborers.
- Local governments are in a position to be able to encourage or require tenant participation strategies when approving or funding a farmworker/day labor housing project. Municipalities should be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities
- Local non-profit organizations should be encouraged to pursue state and federal Self-Help Housing programs, through which non-profits assist workers to build and own their homes.

- Non-profits should be encouraged to form mutual housing associations, a type of non-profit which is primarily controlled by the residents. Non-profits can obtain information and assistance on mutual housing associations from the state and national offices of the non-profit Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation.
- Housing would then become an integral element in the process of resident self-improvement and integration into the community. Resident participation and ownership would also help make the projects more acceptable in local communities.

ISSUE

Session participants indicated that there was a need to modify local planning and code guidelines to permit the construction of housing for the farmworker and day laborer population. In urban areas, some participants expressed the concern that conventional housing standards for aesthetics and design were excessive and added unnecessary additional costs. In rural areas, standards need to be altered to allow alternative housing solutions, such as dormitories and mobile homes.

Action

It was agreed that the approach to these problems needed to be coordinated between local governments. It was recommended to:

- Encourage SANDAG or the County to coordinate local government planning and code changes and to develop standardized language.
- Encourage SANDAG or the County to immediately develop standard language for the Farmworker and Day Laborer sections of the Housing Elements of local governments. These elements are currently being updated as required by the State.
- Encourage government staff, elected officials and community leaders to visit existing housing projects for farmworkers. Staunch opponents of such projects as well as supporters, who understand the need for housing but are uncertain about particular solutions, would benefit from this education.

- Organize a tour of projects in the Coachella Valley, where hundreds of housing units have been developed and operate successfully. Extend invitations to media representatives. Accept the offer of the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition to host the tour.

Regulation of Rural Homeless Camps

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REGULATION OF RURAL HOMELESS CAMPS

Participants in this session wrestled with regulation and the need to improve conditions in existing rural homeless camps.

After viewing a slide show depicting conditions in camps in the region, participants addressed the factors that have led to the establishment of these camps, such as the economic conditions in Mexico, the low wages paid to workers and the lack of affordable housing. The majority of the camp residents are older, single workers with legal status.

The following is an overview of the discussion regarding the complex issue of camp living conditions.

Abatement

The most drastic measure considered was abatement which actually means closing the camp. Moving or closing the camps does not solve the problem, but only serves to transfer it to another location because farmworkers still need a place to live. Sometimes workers reestablish camps in the same location. The cost of abatement can be considerable and presents a burden to the property owner. Abatement does, however, reduce the liability for the property owner as well as the concerns of nearby residents.

Improving Camp Conditions

If private property issues (such as liability) can be resolved,the next interim step is to improve camp living conditions. None of the existing camps meet the codes. Fire, health, building and zoning code regulations can be obstacles to temporary solutions or "alternative" housing. Regulations associated with the voucher system and other State and Federal sources of funding have limited the ability of farmworkers to improve their standards of living.

The locations of some of the camps result in negative environmental impacts as well, since workers often live near environmentally sensitive areas such as drainage systems which they rely on as their water source. Even if private property concerns can be eliminated, residents in adjacent communities usually prefer to have this population out of sight. Presently, each jurisdiction handles abatement issues differently.

Special Housing Standards Needed

One of the highest priorities is the need to establish standards for temporary, transitional and permanent housing for the rural homeless. There is a need to distinguish between legal and non-legal housing that allows the development of non–traditional but acceptable safe standards to encourage the temporary upgrade of camp conditions.

In the interim, local governments could pass emergency ordinances to relax standards temporarily until permanent regulations can be adopted. Final regulations should be uniform yet broad enough to allow flexibility.

Action Steps

Participants recommended the following action steps:

Compile sample ordinances from areas that are successfully working with similar issues, like the Central Valley counties. Using the most effective regulations from other parts of the state, coordinate the development of specific standards for rural farmworker housing through SANDAG or the County of San Diego to allow all agencies to reach agreement on the standards. A major objective is to have standards that are uniform throughout the region and consistently enforced. The initial program could be a pilot project which would enable other jurisdictions in the region to assess its effectiveness and degree of public acceptance before adoption.

Work with local jurisdictions and community-based organizations to develop incentives for temporary solutions on private land until permanent solutions are developed.

Develop a legislative agenda for adoption by all jurisdictions. Such agendas need to be advocated on both the State and Federal level.

In order to get the needed ordinances adopted, the following comprehensive strategy should be implemented probably through a central authority, coordinator or ombudsman:

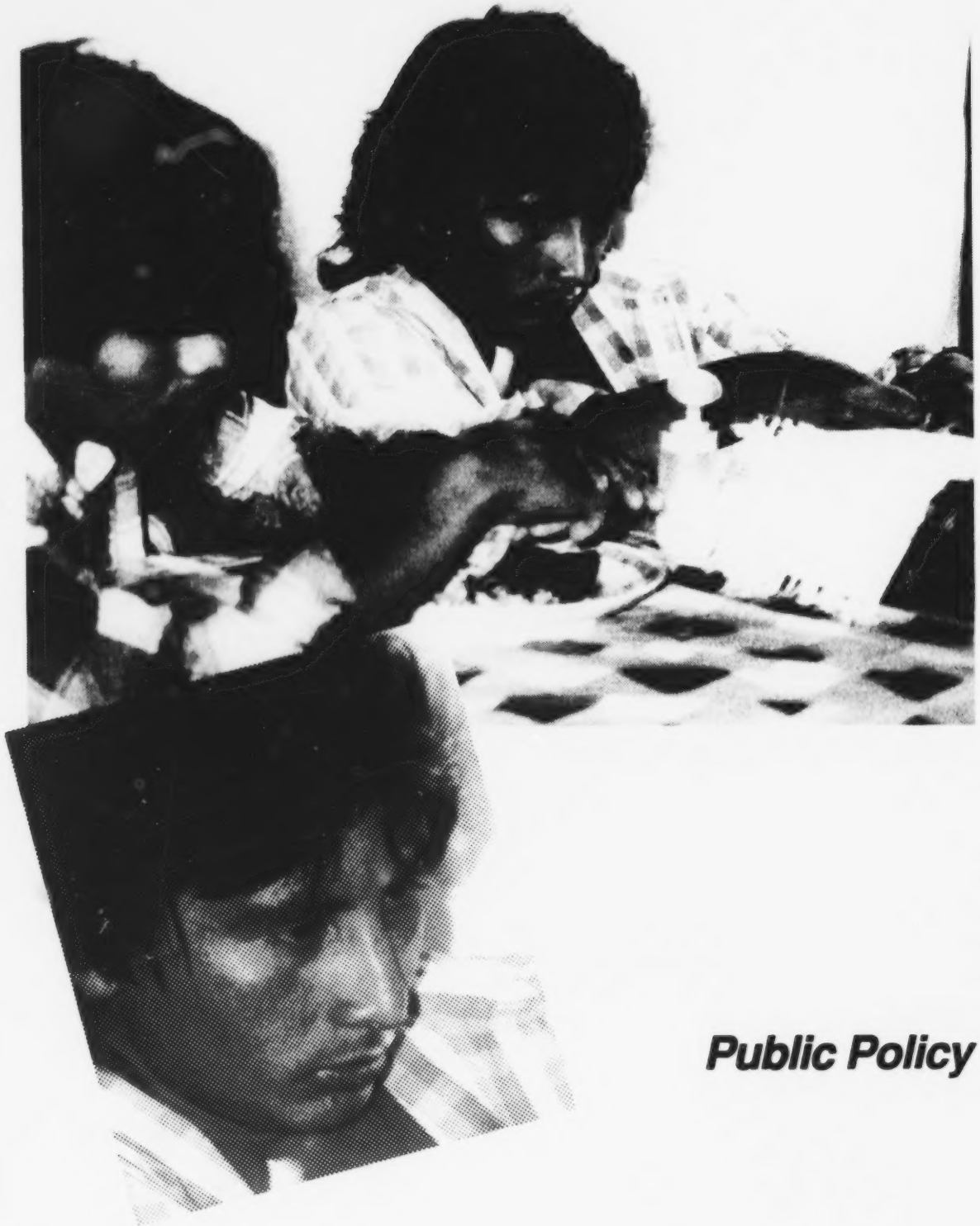
- Educate policy-makers on this issue by providing tours of farmworker camps and other means
- Organize joint conferences for local jurisdictions in the region including key community-based organizations

- Organize a Congressional hearing on this issue to elicit federal support and funding
- Develop good media relations and support
- Work to develop an alternative resolution system to the courts, such as mediation

Emergency Shelters

Finally, participants were concerned that few emergency shelters are available for this population.

Efforts should be focused on locating, designating and publicizing the availability of emergency shelters such as in public buildings, churches and other community-based structures.



Public Policy

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Workshop participants identified and prioritized public policy issues and developed strategies for bringing about change through local, state, and federal decision makers.

For the purposes of the discussion, a consensus was reached that the legal status of immigrants (documented or undocumented) did not alter the need for housing. Services at the state and federal level are provided without regard for immigration status, only local jurisdictions make this distinction when providing services. Group members also recognized that while the population of workers at any given time may be temporary, the overall problem is not and requires much more than bandaid solutions.

Elected representatives stated that one of their major obstacles in implementing non-profit housing development is the lack of public information. Specifically, people who attend council meetings to express their opinions on housing are those who are very strongly opposed or strongly in favor of issues. The rest (majority) of the public are not informed and might be able to provide needed support for "hot" issues once given the opportunity to view the farmworker/day laborer as a contributing and valuable member of the community.

Workshop participants raised 54 issues which were divided into seven categories (see Appendix A for a complete list). By group consensus, it was decided that each category should be addressed by a decision making body authorized to develop comprehensive strategies for resolving the problem. The seven major categories identified were:

- Public information (Priority #1)
- Responsibility/accountability (Priority #2)
- Legal issues
- Housing
- Farmworker/Day laborer needs for services
- Funding
- Bi-national Issues

Conclusion

The overarching problem, according to workshop participants, is misperceptions by the general public regarding farmworkers and day laborers. Solutions could include the following:

1. Develop a bilingual fact sheet to address myths about workers. Target the audience and identify key myths and strategies to explore these myths. Use SANDAG or some other credible organization for disseminating the information.
2. Develop and air in conjunction with KPBS a video and/or program addressing the housing issue.
3. Develop a public advertising saturation campaign (similar to the "no smoking" campaign) dealing with key issues related to housing for farmworkers and day laborers.
4. Obtain funding for public information programs (target Foundations).
5. Establish an elementary school program (educating children on the valuable contributions of migrant workers). A County-wide Task Force in cooperation with the schools could design and implement this program.
6. Encourage the media to present positive images of migrant workers.
7. Establish a County-wide Task Force with representation broadened to include migrant workers. The Task Force could be chaired by Councilmember Wolfsheimer and Supervisor MacDonald and given a mandate to implement conference recommendations.
8. Request that the San Diego Housing Commission provide funding and staffing for this County-wide Task Force.

Public Policy and Perception Issues

Public Information

- Public prejudice and racism inhibit positive action.
- Many migrants are viewed as criminals.
- Migrants are not perceived as members of the community.
- The problem is seen as temporary.
- As rural areas become more urbanized, residents want the problems resolved anywhere but their own backyards.
- The term "alien" needs to be defined.
- Some argue that "they" prefer to live in those conditions.
- Some assume that this is one homogenous population and one solution will resolve all the issues.
- The drought is a factor that will affect the problem.
- The migrant population is segregated from the rest of the community.
- Agriculture is an important industry in San Diego.
- Economic benefits from this population should be publicized.
- The media presents the migrant population as a blight on the community.
- The public assumes that public assistance is given to this group.
- Resentment is generated within the community regarding issues of public liability and costs for housing.
- The public needs to know exactly who profits from migrant workers.

Legal Issues

- All law enforcement agencies involved need to work more collaboratively.
- The victims have not been clearly identified.
- Migrants do not think that they have rights.

Responsibility/ Accountability

- Issues of responsibility and accountability are debated among local, State and Federal levels.
- Low income people are frequently disenfranchised because local governments are responsive to the people who put them in office, not those who have needs but can't express them at the ballot box.
- Is this a public or private responsibility?
- Leadership from the political arena is lacking.
- Special interest and turf issues make problem resolution more difficult.
- This is also a Federal problem because of interdependent international economies.
- Jurisdictions overlap so the problem must be addressed on a regional basis.
- Developing solutions for this problem has not been a high priority.
- Federal immigration policies are a contributing factor.
- Bureaucracy impedes timely solutions.

Funding

- Funding sources for solutions are limited.
- Budget deficits at the Federal, State and local levels are a consideration.
- The problems are compounded because there are no private free market solutions.
- A lack of tax revenues means no new money for these problems.

Housing

- Housing is neither affordable nor available.
- Wages do not permit migrants to venture into the housing mainstream.
- Property tax laws should be examined to see how they promote use of existing surplus bedrooms in the county.
- Land use policies must be reevaluated.
- The current housing conditions negatively impact property values.

Farmworker/ Day Laborer Needs for Services

- Many services are needed to deal with the problem.
- The group and its needs are not clearly defined.
- Health issues are of paramount importance and cannot be considered separately from housing issues.
- Migrants have limited, if any, access to community resources.
- Formal education on the relevant topics (social issues) must be provided to the migrants.
- Underemployment and unemployment create more hardship for those who want to work.
- The accessibility of transportation to and from job sites needs to be considered when planning housing.
- Issues affecting urban homeless are not the same as those affecting the rural homeless.
- The migrant population represents a new group of poor people with problems different from those of other poor.

Bi-National Issues

- INS checkpoints do nothing to address the actual problems.
- Some laws do not differentiate between documented and undocumented. Immigration status does not change the fact that there is a lack of housing, health care, etc.
- Many perceived that jobs are taken away from U.S. citizens.
- Opportunities for employment in Mexico continue to decline.
- This is bi-national problem and bi-national relations affect the outcome of any proposed solutions.
- Those dealing with the issues do not have a broad awareness of the border region as a whole.
- All policies must be considered within the framework of our Federal policies with Mexico and Central America and the economic conditions in those countries.

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